M 245 Next to manioc, bananas occupy the first rank among the native crops, at least among the peoples of Lake Leopold II, the [59] lower Lukenie, and the region between the Congo and the Kasai. Among the tribes of the upper Lukenie, cultivation of banana trees is less developed, and in the Bena Dibele-Kole region it is almost completely absent.

The natives prefer to cultivate the large banana. It is less juicy and more floury than the small one and yields larger crops. The banana groves are always set up near the village and most often directly behind the dwellings. It follows that these groves have the general shape of the village and, in a way, frame it.

Banana trees, in order to thrive, must be planted in very fertile soil which has been well cleared and deeply turned. To promote their growth and increase their yield, the natives dump into the banana groves all the waste from the kitchen, ordure, ashes, and sweepings from the regular cleaning of the village

S [346]

Fig. 39. Hut for the Nkisi of the Hunt and a Banana Tree with Flower and Fruit, Village of Madjuku, Bobaie Tribe.

M [57] and huts. They also go into the groves to answer the calls of nature.

M 243 Maize is not cultivated on an important scale. Beyond the post at Tolo, maize seems to be completely unknown. Among

1: Maes--40 E-5 (1913-1914) 1924 FO32 Mongo FO32
Teke FI33

M
●243 tue peoples of the Fimi, Lake Leopold II, and the lower Lukenie, the cultivation of maize is quite rudimentary. On the other hand, we encountered large fields of maize among the Bateke and especially among the Banfumu of the Kapanda territories. It is T well to note, however, that the intense cultivation of maize 243 in that region was not due to any direct use of it by the native, 439 but to the hope of selling it profitably to the traders and workers of Leopoldville-Kinshasa.

Maize is sown in seed holes, 30 to 60 centimeters apart. The holes are dug in cleared ground as the rainy season draws near. The maize shoots appear after four days. At this time the plants are quite vulnerable to the depredations of birds. The children keep watch over the fields from morning to night for four or five days and drive the birds away with their cries.

Care of the crop includes weeding and thinning out the plants. Maize is neither hoed nor propped. It is sometimes sown as an extra crop in manioc fields. The maturity of maize is marked by the yellow, dry spathes. The harvest takes place some time after its maturity. The maize stalks are pulled out by the women and children, and the ears are cut off on the spot and carried to the village. [60]

The cultivation of rice is unknown in the region we visited, except among the peoples of the Bena Dibele-Kole region. The ground is hoed before sowing. The rice is sown in seed holes during the first quarter of the rainy season. The care of the fields is limited to two or three weedings during the initial stage of the plant's growth. The crop must be guarded regularly and uninterruptedly from morning to night from flowering to harvest. The rice is cut with knives, ear by ear. The ears are gathered by the handful. These are put in loose sheaves and, after several days, piled in stacks. The threshing is done in the village M by family groups. The native chooses a large, well-beaten [442] area and uses long rods. Husking is done with a pestle in a wooden mortar. The husked rice is winnowed in baskets of rattan splints, which are circular and shallow with a reinforced rim. The average yield varies between 2,000 and 3,500 kilograms per hectare.

M
•243 The cultivation of rice serves less to nourish the native than for trade. He usually sells his harvest immediately after the husking.

T
M
244 Peanuts thrive in the region of the Banfumu and among the Bankumbu. They grow best in light soil and are not suitable for land cleared from the great forest. The crop demands a great deal of care and regular upkeep. Fields invaded by weeds yield nothing. The harvest takes place when the crop is mature and is the task of the women with the help of the children. The peanuts are placed in baskets carried on the back and taken to the village. The native spreads them out in the sun to dry. He turns them again and again, two or three times a day, and brings them into the hut at night.

M
249 Sugar-cane plantations are set up in marshy lowlands.
462 All the work on this crop falls to the men. These plantations
473 are found only in regions where the natives make masanga, sugar-cane beer. Sugar-cane fields are especially numerous in the villages on the lower Lukenie and the Fimi.

M
244 As a rule the natives also cultivate a few legumes, sweet potatoes, and yams, but on a small scale and without giving them any particular care. [61]

Hunting

M
224 Hunting is practiced only by men. They engage in it, not for
462 sport, diversion, or relaxation, but for the sole purpose of procuring meat and fat.

M
224 From their earliest childhood, the boys get together to beat
357 the grass and catch mice, rats, and other rodents which swarm in the bush. Nothing is more interesting than to see them at work. Ten, fifteen, or sometimes twenty of them form a large circle. Armed with sticks, they beat the grass and make an unbelievable din. Little by little the circle narrows, moving in on a small well-cleared space. The oldest, most daring and most agile of the boys keep watch over this space, their eyes alert and riveted on the edge of the grass, ready to pounce. The beaters redouble their zeal, strike, shout, gesture, and gradually drive all the rodents

Dengase F016
Teke FI 33

the mixture is stirred vigorously. This produces a sort of soft bread called kifunge by the natives. The Bankutshu and Basongo-Meno also use maize or millet flour to make kifunge. Both are ground in the large mortars used to make manioc flour and are sifted through the basketwork sieves.

Kifunge is always eaten hot. The housewife serves it on a wooden plate previously rubbed with palm oil.

We thus see that the peoples of the Bena Dibele region are differentiated from the other tribes not only by their way of making manioc flour and the shape of the utensils used, mortar, pestle, sieve, and pottery, but also by the special use made of manioc flour and the use of maize and millet flour in making kifunge. There are then, in this respect, two ethnic groups which seem to be quite different from each other. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to determine whether kifunge is truly indigenous

Fig. 73. Bateke Pulverizing Manioc.

to the civilization of [128] these natives or was introduced by the Basonge-Baluba peoples of the Sankuru-Lubefu. When questioned on this subject, the natives sometimes told us that they had always made kifunge, while some old men claimed that kifunge was still unknown during their childhood.

As we have noted, the peoples west of the Bena Dibele-Kole region cultivate maize. This crop is of secondary importance, except in the region of the Banfumungu of Kapanda and Engrei.

Maize gathered before maturity is eaten raw or roasted over a low fire. The ears which are allowed to ripen on the stalk are carefully shelled, the kernels ground in a wooden mortar with a cylindrical pestle, and the flour is winnowed or passed through a sieve.

The mortar used to make maize flour is made from a section of a tree trunk, with a rectangular opening hollowed in the outer surface and perpendicular to the axis of the trunk. These mortars are very crude, poorly worked, and quite rudimentary. Besides these, one sometimes find others which are better made, small

Fig. 74. Batitu Women Shelling Maize and Preparing Vegetables.

cubes provided with a lug or a liana. Let us note, however, that among the Banfumu southeast of Tua we found a mortar of similar shape which the natives used to prepare vegetables.

The sieves used for maize flour in this region are also a special type. The sides are made in an open weave. The general form resembles that of a large bottle with a square bottom, cylindrical body, constricted neck, and slightly flared rim.

The housewife mixes the maize flour with palm oil to form a somewhat thick dough. She wraps it carefully in leaves and boils it for 10 to 15 minutes. This dish, the mokwof of the Basakata-Mosengere, is served very hot, usually seasoned a little